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ABSTRACT

The study surveyed 80 young adults (50 male, 30 female) referred through I.E.P.A. (Individualized Educational Program for Adults) for students with learning problems who wish to acquire preemployment skills and/or to improve their vocational status by upgrading their educational level. The pre- and postassessment was conducted in the areas of word reading, oral reading, mathematics, spelling, and written expression. Results included that males made greater improvement than females per month in oral reading--passages, reading comprehension--passages, and spelling; while females' improvement per month exceeded males' in oral reading--single word, mathematics, and expressive language--written. (SBH)

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INDIVIDUAL INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS FOR LEARNING DISABLED ADULTS

AN EVALUATION

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF
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INTRODUCTION

Vancouver Community College, King Edward Campus, is a post secondary educational institution, located in Vancouver, in British Columbia's Lower Mainland. King Edward Campus has an average annual enrolment of approximately 8,000 students whose ages range from sixteen years to sixty years.

The programs offered are basically designed for the students who wish to acquire pre-employment skills and/or to improve their vocational status by upgrading their educational level. The educational programs range from the first grade level up to, and including, the twelfth grade level. Classes for students who have English as a second language, and who want to improve their English, are also offered.

The students either pay their own tuition fees, or are sponsored by such agencies as, Canada Employment and Immigration Commission, Ministry of Human Resources, Division of Aid to the Handicapped, Workmen's Compensation Board, the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia, and Native Indian Bands.

There are three divisions within the King Edward Campus and the three divisions are as follows:-

1) College Foundations: Basic Education (Grades 1 - 8), Business Education, English, Mathematics, Science, Social Sciences, Reading and Study Skills.

2) Communication Arts: English Language Training, Music

3) Training and Development: Basic Training in Skill Development (B.T.S.D., Grade equivalencies 1 - 12), Programs on Deafness, Vocational Planning and Work Readiness Programs, Community and Family Aide Program, Homemaker Program, Employment Orientation for Women, Pharmacy Assistant Program.

In 1977 and 1978 the Counselling Department noted that there were increasing numbers of referrals of students who were experiencing learning problems within the regular classroom.

A Counsellor decided to survey the campus instructors to find out how many students were experiencing definite learning problems. When the results were tabulated from an over 90% return of responses, it was found that an average of 14.5% of the students taught by each instructor were thought to be experiencing definite learning problems for which diagnostic and remedial services, beyond the existing support systems, were needed.

In response to this need, the Counsellor and a Divisional Chairman drafted a written proposal in order to apply for a Ministry of Education, Special Projects Grant funding. The basic request was for adequate funding in order to employ a learning diagnostician/instructor for a trial basis of one year. If the program proved successful, it could be expected that the cost of the program would be included in the regular college budget for the following year. The pair were successful in securing a grant, and the position of learning diagnostician was advertised.

On September 25th, 1978, the I.E.P.A. (Individualized Educational Program for Adults) commenced at King Edward Campus with the hiring of a learning diagnostician.

A format for student referrals was implemented. Instructors could refer any students, whom they feel are experiencing learning difficulties, to their department representative on the I.E.P.A. Committee (the I.E.P.A. Committee is composed of a representative from each instructional department, as well as from the Medical Services, the Learning Centre, the Counselling Department and the Learning Diagnostician. In addition, outside agency representatives are invited to attend meetings where applicable.) The department representatives then arrange for the referring instructor either to attend the weekly I.E.P.A. Committee meeting in order to describe the student's exhibited behaviours, or to forward a written report via the department representative. The I.E.P.A. Committee, as a whole, determines from the presented material whether the student is an appropriate referral to the Learning Diagnostician. In addition, referrals may be made to other support services such as vision and hearing testing, psychiatric assessment, medical diagnosis, counselling or tutoring in the Learning Centre.

If the student is referred to the Learning Diagnostician for an assessment, an initial interview is conducted with the student, prior to the assessment. The purpose of the meeting is two-fold: explaining the process of the I.E.P.A. and the learning diagnostician's philosophy to the student, and, eliciting from the student, information on the learning problems that he/she has experienced throughout the educational process.

After the learning assessment has been completed, all the findings are shared with the student and the proposed program is explained in detail. For those students deemed in need of an individualized program, a half hour per session, three times per week program is established. The referring instructor is then informed of what is being attempted in the individual sessions and what might be added and/or deleted in the regular classroom in order to complement the program. The learning diagnostician is involved in the individual prescription of the program for each of the referred students and is able to make any on-going necessary adjustments to their programs. Throughout this process, the student remains enrolled in a regular class.

The learning diagnostician is also responsible for the conduct of in-service workshops for the campus instructors so that they can be made more aware of the forms that student learning problems take. In this way, instructors' recognition of learning problems become more valid and accurate.

DATA COLLECTION

The students were assessed with the instrument, or instruments, which best served the analytical purpose at the time of referral. The initial assessments were all conducted by the Learning Diagnostician at King Edward Campus.

At the completion of their program, or at the end of the month of June/the early part of the month of July, as many of the students as could be contacted were brought in for a re-assessment using the same instruments that were used in the initial assessment. These assessments were conducted by an outside qualified diagnostician and the Learning Diagnostician at King Edward Campus.

INSTRUMENTS EMPLOYED

For the single word reading assessment, the W.R.A.T. - Wide Range Achievement Test - was used.

For the passage oral reading assessment and the passage reading comprehension assessment, the Spache Diagnostic Reading Scales and/or the McCarthy Diagnostic Reading Test were used.

For the mathematics assessment, the W.R.A.T. - Wide Range Achievement Test - and/or the Key Math were used.

For the spelling assessment, the W.R.A.T. - Wide Range Achievement Test - was used.

For the written expression assessment, the completely original story was submitted to a neutral teacher, skilled in written expression, to ascertain a grade level for each of the presented stories.

STUDY RESULTS

There was a total of 80 students referred through the I.E.P.A. Committee from the time of its inception in October, 1978 to the end of June, 1979.

Of the 80 students referred; 50 were male and 30 were female, for a 5 : 3 ratio exactly.

i) Ages:

Average age of female students - 23.7 years
Average age of male students - 21.5 years

There were 7 males and 1 female for whom no age was obtained as they were not assessed.
If the 7 males and 1 female were dropped from the total, then the,

Average age of female students - 24.5 years
Average age of male students - 25.0 years

ii) Program Enrolment:

	Males	Females	Total
Basic Education	21	6	27
B.T.S.D.	11	13	24
College Foundations	8	6	14
Vocational Orientation for Youth	3	0	3
English Language Training	1	0	1

STUDY RESULTS

ii) Program Enrolment: (continued)

	Males	Females	Total
Basic Job Readiness Training	1	0	1
Outreach	1	0	1
Life Skills	1	0	1
Pharmacy Assistant	1	1	2
Community and Family Aide	0	2	2
Basic Ed. Skill Training	0	1	1

iii) Sponsors:

For the students whose sponsors were known:

	Males	Females	Total
Self-sponsored	18	8	26
C.E.I.C.	8	9	17
Ministry of Human Resources	5	6	11
Division of Aid to the Handicapped	3	2	5
Indian Bands	1	1	2
Insurance Corporation of B.C.	1	0	1

iv) Assessments:

On the male side, 24 students were assessed twice and 26 were not.

On the female side, 19 students were assessed twice and 11 were not.

There was a total of 43 students who were assessed twice and 37 who were not.

v) Oral Reading - Single Word:

9 males were assessed twice.
8 females were assessed twice.
17 students in all were assessed twice.

a) Average improvement for males - 8.7 months
Average improvement for females - 13.0 months
Average improvement for all students - 9.7 months

These statistics should be viewed in terms of the length of time that the students were in the program.

STUDY RESULTS

v) Oral Reading - Single Word: (continued)

b) Average length of time in program for males - 3.8 months
Average length of time in program for females - 4.1 months
Average length of time in program for all students - 3.9 months

c) For the males, the average improvement of 8.7 months in single word reading in an average of 3.8 months in the program is a statistic of 2.3 months of single word reading improvements per month of time in the program.

For the females, the average improvement of 13.0 months in single word reading in an average of 4.1 months in the program is a statistic of 3.2 months of single word reading improvement per month of time in the program.

For all students, the average improvement of 9.7 months in single word reading in an average of 3.9 months in the program is a statistic of 2.5 months of single word reading improvement per month of time in the program.

d) Average age of males - 32.7 years
Average age of females - 30.6 years
Average age of all students - 31.7 years

vi) Oral Reading - Passages:

10 males were assessed twice
4 females were assessed twice
14 students were assessed twice.

a) Average improvement for males - 15.0 months
Average improvement for females - 6.0 months
Average improvement for all students - 13.0 months

These statistics should be viewed in terms of the length of time that the students were in the program.

b) Average length of time in program for males - 3.4 months
Average length of time in program for females - 2.5 months
Average length of time in program for all students - 3.1 months

c) For the males, the average improvement of 15.0 months in oral reading - passages in an average of 3.4 months in the program is a statistic of 4.4 months of oral reading - passage improvement per month of time in the program.

For the females, the average improvement of 6.0 months in oral reading - passages in an average of 2.5 months in the program is a statistic of 2.4 months of oral reading - passage improvement per month of time in the program.

STUDY RESULTS

vi) Oral Reading - Passages: (continued)

c) For all students, the average improvement of 13.0 months in oral reading - passages in an average of 3.1 months in the program is a statistic of 4.2 months of oral reading - passage improvement per month of time in the program.

d) Average age of males - 25.8 years
Average age of females - 22.8 years
Average age of all students - 24.9 years

vii) Reading Comprehension - Passages:

14 males were assessed twice.
10 females were assessed twice.
24 students in all were assessed twice.

a) Average improvement for males - 18.0 months
Average improvement for females - 13.0 months
Average improvement for all students - 16.0 months

These statistics should be viewed in terms of the length of time that the students were in the program.

b) Average length of time in program for males - 3.9 months
Average length of time in program for females - 3.7 months
Average length of time in program for all students - 3.8 months

c) For the males, the average improvement of 18.0 months in reading comprehension - passages in an average of 3.9 months in the program, is a statistic of 4.6 months of reading comprehension - passages improvement per month of time in the program.

For the females, the average improvement of 13.0 months in reading comprehension - passages in an average of 3.7 months in the program is a statistic of 3.5 months of reading comprehension - passages improvement per month of time in the program.

For all students, the average improvement of 16.0 months in reading comprehension - passages in an average of 3.8 months in the program, is a statistic of 4.2 months of reading comprehension - passages improvement per month of time in the program.

d) Average age of males - 28.5 years
Average age of females - 26.5 years
Average age of all students - 27.7 years

viii) Spelling:

13 males were assessed twice
8 females were assessed twice
21 students in all were assessed twice.

STUDY RESULTS

viii) Spelling: (continued)

a) Average improvement for males - 12.0 months
Average improvement for females - 8.0 months
Average improvement for all students - 9.0 months

These statistics should be viewed in terms of the length of time that the students were in the program.

b) Average length of time in program for males - 3.2 months
Average length of time in program for females - 4.0 months
Average length of time in program for all students - 3.5 months

c) For the males, the average improvement of 12.0 months in spelling in the average of 3.2 months in the program, is a statistic of 3.8 months of spelling improvement per month of time in the program.

For the females, the average improvement of 8.0 months in spelling in the average of 4.0 months in the program, is a statistic of 2.0 months of spelling improvement per month of time in the program.

For all students, the average improvement of 9.0 months in spelling in the average of 3.5 months in the program, is a statistic of 2.6 months of spelling improvement per month of time in the program.

d) Average age of males - 27.3 years
Average age of females - 28.8 years
Average age of all students - 27.9 years

ix) Mathematics:

3 males were assessed twice
3 females were assessed twice
6 students in all were assessed twice.

a) Average improvement for males - - 4.0 months
Average improvement for females - 16.0 months
Average improvement for all students - 9.0 months

These statistics should be viewed in terms of the length of time that the students were in the program.

b) Average length of time in program for males - 3.7 months
Average length of time in program for females - 3.7 months
Average length of time in program for all students - 3.7 months

c) For the males, the average improvement of 4.0 months in mathematics in an average of 3.7 months in the program, is a statistic of 1.1 months of mathematics improvement per month of time in the program.

STUDY RESULTS

ix) Mathematics: (continued)

c) For the females, the average improvement of 16.0 months in mathematics in an average of 3.7 months in the program, is a statistic of 4.3 months of mathematics improvement per month of time in the program.

For all students, the average improvement of 9.0 months in mathematics in an average of 3.7 months in the program, is a statistic of 2.4 months of mathematics improvement per month of time in the program.

d) Average age of males - 23.3 years
Average age of females - 29.0 years
Average age of all students - 26.1 years

x) Expressive Language - Written

13 males were assessed twice
5 females were assessed twice
18 students in all were assessed twice.

a) Average improvement for males - 12.0 months
Average improvement for females - 12.0 months
Average improvement for all students - 12.0 months

These statistics should be viewed in terms of the length of time that the students were in the program.

b) Average length of time in the program for males - 3.9 months
Average length of time in the program for females - 4.1 months
Average length of time in the program for all students - 4.1 months

c) For the males, the average improvement of 12.0 months in expressive language - written in an average of 3.9 months in the program, is a statistic of 3.1 months of expressive language - written improvement per month of time in the program.

For the females, the average improvement of 12.0 months in expressive language - written in an average of 4.1 months in the program, is a statistic of 2.9 months of expressive language - written improvement per month of time in the program.

For all students, the average improvement of 12.0 months in expressive language - written in an average of 4.1 months in the program,is a statistic of 2.9 months of expressive language - written improvement per month of time in the program.

d) Average age of males - 27.2 years
Average age of females - 31.6 years
Average age of all students - 28.4 years

STUDY RESULTS

xi) Student Status at the End of the Year:

Of the 80 students who were referred to the I.E.P.A. for an assessment, the following was the placement or current status of the students at the end of June/early July, 1979.

	Males	Females	Total
1. Unknown	29	14	43
(not assessed)	(26	10	36)
2. Employed	10	4	14
3. Continuing at K.E.C.	9	6	15
4. Unemployed	0	1	1
5. Continued to university	0	1	1
6. Psychiatric Hospital	0	1	1
7. Deceased	1	0	1
8. Waiting for a trade course	0	1	1
9. Transferred to another college	0	1	1
10. On welfare	1	1	2

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

1. General: It has been my experience, as short as it has been, that the adult who has a learning disability exhibits certain factors that set them apart from the young child who has a learning disability.

The adult generally has a higher level of motivation as this may be his/her last chance at sponsorship to return for upgrading, a possible means to the end of a better paying job, seeing other adults in the same boat with less skills than him/her self, and, he/she on the individual program has a chance to achieve some measure(s) of success.

The adult generally is better able to reason out why certain steps are important and what part they play in the educational jigsaw puzzle.

The adult generally is easier to reason with because of his/her experiences through maturity and previous opportunities.

The adult generally has acquired other skills that can be used as security blankets when the going gets tough and he/she has to sidetrack for a respite from a new challenge which may be quite difficult.

The adult generally is able to see the goals that are hopefully attainable by the step-by-step incremental steps of the program. And, of course, the goal in the outside working world to which he/she is seeking.

The adult generally is better equipped to be able to see the relationship between presented variables on a horizontal basis and the goals ahead on the vertical basis.

The adult generally welcomes the response that someone may be going to do something about the problem that he/she has been stuck with for a long time, most since elementary school learning assistance and precious few since secondary school learning assistance.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

1. General: (continued)

The adult generally is able to change his/her expectations for not only success or failure in the upgrading program, but the range of choices that may exist for the student on the outside, so to speak.

The adult generally is able to extract more tangible rewards from life due to newly-acquired skills that may make reading signs and/or a newspaper a part of his/her new life.

2. Specific:

In Oral-Reading - Single Word, it was seen that the females made 3.2 months of oral reading - single word improvement per month in the program, while the males made 2.3 months of oral reading - single word improvement per month in the program.

In Oral Reading - Passages, it was seen that the males made 4.4 months of oral reading - passages improvement per month in the program, while the females made 2.4 months of oral reading - single word improvement per month in the program.

In Reading-Comprehension - Passages, it was seen that the males made 4.6 months of reading comprehension - passages improvement per month in the program, while the females made 3.5 months of reading-comprehension - passages improvement per month in the program.

In Spelling, it was seen that the males made 3.8 months of spelling improvement per month in the program, while the females made 2.0 months of spelling improvement per month in the program.

In Mathematics, it was seen that the females made 4.3 months of mathematics improvement per month in the program, while the males made 1.1 months of mathematics improvement per month in the program.

In Expressive Language - Written, it was seen that the females made 4.1 months of expressive language - written improvement per month in the program, while the males made 3.1 months of expressive language - written improvement per month in the program.

3. Related:

In Program Enrolment, it was seen that Basic Education with 27 referrals, B.T.S.D. with 24 referrals and College Foundations with 14 referrals were the main contributors of students to the I.E.P.A. program.

In Sponsorships, it was seen that 26 students were self-sponsored, 17 were sponsored by Canada Employment and Immigration Commission and 11 were sponsored by the Ministry of Human Resources.

In Status at the End of the Year, 15 students were continuing studies at King Edward Campus, 14 students were employed full time and 2 students were on welfare.

CONCLUSIONS

It could be seen from the presented data that the program, identified as I.E.P.A. on the King Edward Campus, should continue in its present format. The program seeks to identify the adult learning disabled, analyze his/her learning difficulties and then to provide a program of remediation for these areas of deficit.

The use of objective statistical data to justify a program's existence, too often provides data that does not necessarily read between the lines and tell the true story. A prime example is the student who may have been referred for having difficulty in time and money concepts, whereas most overall instruments of mathematical evaluation take in a whole gamut of mathematical constructs. The overall gain may be negligible, but the gain in the two areas concerned may be remarkable.

The gains reported for each student have to be evaluated in the terms of the contribution of the I.E.P.A. program which complements the in class program contribution and any extra assistance that may be available to the student in the home at night.

Factors that contribute to a low score or lower score than the actual abilities really are on the initial assessments, are the hesitancy and trauma associated with this process from previous child-age experiences. At the post-test, so to speak, the student is less hesitant and the trauma of the situation has been diminished considerably.

The relationship between the grade placement level of the students on some of the test instruments and their actual levels of placement and achievement in King Edward Campus are often poles apart, or grade levels apart. The instruments have to be utilized more in an analytical sense than a grade level sense.

The intent of this study was only to scratch the statistical surface to see what could be seen rather than to conduct any multivariable analysis which would have required a much larger amount of funding.